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UNCLAS HARARE 001051

SIPDIS

AF/PD FOR COX AND ROBERTSON, AF/S FOR KRAFT AND SCHLACHTER, AF/RA FOR DIPALMA, INR/R/MR, NSC FOR JENDAYI FRAZER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ZI PREL PHUM

SUBJECT: "JOY TV" SUSPENDS BBC NEWS BROADCASTS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. NOT FOR INTERNET POSTING.

¶11. (U) Joy Television, a nominally independent Zimbabwean television broadcaster, has suspended BBC News programming with immediate effect. Since its launch in July 1997, the station has broadcast a BBC World TV news summary at 2000 each day. Joy TV offered no explanation for dropping the BBC news.

¶12. (U) Joy TV operates on a frequency leased from the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) and uses ZBC facilities for its few productions. For the most part, Joy TV offers its viewers (limited to the Harare area) American sitcoms, action and talk shows. As part of its licensing agreement with the Government of Zimbabwe, Joy TV does not produce its own news programming. It has, on occasion, produced talk shows. Joy TV's most recent talk show series disappeared shortly after MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai appeared as the featured guest just before the presidential election.

¶13. (SBU) Comment: Joy TV's license expires on May 31, 2002. The Government of Zimbabwe has indicated that it will not renew the license. Joy TV management, however, maintains that it will find an accommodation with the government in order to stay on the air. Given the Government of Zimbabwe's hatred of the BBC, we suspect that Joy TV's sudden cancellation of BBC news is part of that "accommodation."

SULLIVAN